

AP-NORC SURVEY: OLDER ADULTS LIVING IN RURAL AREAS AND WHO ARE BLACK OR HISPANIC EXPRESS MORE RESERVATIONS ABOUT LOCAL SERVICES THAT SUPPORT AGING

Adults age 50 and older think their communities can support aging at home, but equity issues persist.

Chicago, IL, April 27, 2022— Older adults are generally confident that they will be able to stay in their current community as they age with access to the services needed to age at home, according to a new study of adults age 50 and older from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

However, while still holding a generally positive outlook, some segments of the older population – especially those who live in rural areas and who are Black or Hispanic -- have more reservations about the services that support aging in their local area.

The study, funded by The SCAN Foundation, finds that 7 in 10 adults age 50 and older consider themselves very or extremely prepared to stay in their current residence as long as possible as they age. Many also evaluate their communities positively when it comes to supporting aging along a variety of metrics. About 70% think their area meets their needs for the kinds of food they want to eat, health care, and Wi-Fi access. Nearly 8 in 10 think the health care providers in their area understand their needs, take their concerns seriously, and have been able to address their needs.

But those in urban areas – and suburban areas especially – describe their communities as having more supports for aging in place than rural areas. Those in rural areas are less likely to think their area meets their needs for healthy food, transportation, internet access, health care, and social activities. Rural residents are also less likely to report access to discounted transportation, grocery assistance, and home-delivered meals. They are least likely to think community services are easy to get to or designed for people their age. And fewer report easy access to a host of medical services.

“The divide between rural adults and those in urban and suburban areas in access to key services continues to stand out as a major disparity in this country,” said Dr. Sarita A. Mohanty, president and CEO of The SCAN Foundation. “The vast majority of older adults prefer to age in their communities but without access to resources like health care, transportation, healthy food, and social activities, those in rural areas will have a much harder time doing so.”

A similar divide emerges between older Black and Hispanic adults compared to older white adults. Both older Black and Hispanic adults are less likely to rate their community as doing a good job providing access to resources like high-quality health care, grocery stores, and places to socialize. Fewer older Black and Hispanic adults think it is easy to find services in their area that are respectful of their language or cultural background. And Black adults in particular cite a lack of healthy foods and the kinds of food they want, while Hispanics cite a lack of affordable housing.

Though majorities across racial and ethnic groups find health care services easy to access, Black and Hispanic older adults are less likely than white adults to think it would be easy to access pharmacies (89% and 88%, respectively, vs. 95%), physical therapy (75% and 69% vs. 85%), and dental care (76% and 75% vs. 86%). And while most think local health care providers understand their needs and take them seriously, older Hispanics are less likely than their white counterparts to think so. Many of these issues are more severe among lower-income Hispanic older adults.

“To support our aging population, policies need to support communities,” said Jennifer Benz, deputy director of The AP-NORC Center. “These findings reveal the need for a sharper focus on the kinds of neighborhoods that lack these vital resources so that all older adults have the opportunity to age at home.”

About the Study

This survey, funded by The SCAN Foundation, was conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Staff from NORC at the University of Chicago, The Associated Press, and The SCAN Foundation collaborated on all aspects of the study.

Survey Methodology

The nationwide poll was conducted in English and Spanish between February 24 and March 1, 2022, using the Foresight 50+ Consumer Omnibus, a monthly multi-client survey using NORC’s probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population of adults age 50 and older. Online and telephone interviews using landline and cell phones were conducted with adults age 50 and older representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia; 1,762 completed the survey—1,642 via the web and 120 via telephone. The panel excluded recipients of long-term care who live in certain types of institutional settings, such as skilled nursing facilities or nursing homes, depending on how addresses were listed for the facility. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 3.4 percentage points.

In addition, African American and Hispanic respondents were sampled at a higher rate than their proportion of the population for reasons of analysis. The overall margin of sampling error for the 432 completed interviews with African American respondents is +/- 6.6 percentage points. The overall margin of sampling error for the 401 completed interviews with Hispanic respondents is +/- 7.0 percentage points.

For more information, please visit www.longtermcarepoll.org.

About The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research

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The two organizations have established The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research to conduct, analyze, and distribute social science research in the public interest on newsworthy topics, and to use the power of journalism to tell the stories that research reveals. In its 10 years, The AP-NORC Center has conducted more than 250 studies exploring the critical issues facing the public, covering topics like health care, the economy, COVID-19, trust in media, and more.

About The SCAN Foundation

Supported by a grant from The SCAN Foundation - advancing a coordinated and easily navigated system of high-quality services for older adults that preserve dignity and independence.

www.TheSCANFoundation.org

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